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THE WASTE OF YOUTH.

Problems of National Education. By Twelve Scottish Educationists. With Prefatory Note by the Right Hon. Robert Munro. Edited by John Clarke. Pp. xxvi+368. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1919.) Price 12s. net.

THE extension of the school age from fourteen to fifteen, with compulsory education in continuation classes to eighteen years of age, which is the main provision of recent educational legislation, adds four additional years of schooling at the most critical and formative period of life. It is to be hoped rather than expected that better use may be made in the future than has been made in this country of the school period in the past. One opens this book on "*Problems of National Education*," a collection of twelve essays by Scottish educationists, expecting some assurance at least that the stale old stock-in-trade of the schoolmaster derived from the Middle Ages had, in public education at least, been finally discredited. Then Latin was the universal written language, and it has been handed on as a ready-made means of disciplining youth to distasteful tasks, after all intelligible reason has ceased and the manifold activities of a rapidly expanding and luxuriant scientific civilisation have made it unsuitable. But, alas! in education the vicious circle besets one at every turn. It is idle to expect the child to be put *au fait* with the modern world, of which already he probably knows far more in certain ways than his teachers, until the latter have caught up with it and the subjects of their training in the ancient universities and the training institutions been fundamentally recast. But in this book every and any aspect of education is discussed exhaustively rather than this central problem.

The work of building up more and more elaborate superstructures on such false foundations meanwhile goes merrily on. Physical training, ethical, moral, religious, æsthetic, and civic education, anything rather than the intellectual foundations, are all explored in these centrifugal essays by experts in the vain hope of disguising the rottenness of the core. For, excellent and informative as are many of these discussions on the outriders and secondary consequences of national education, on the main theme, which is engaging the attention of the taught, if not the teachers, this volume is singularly vacuous.

Thus we read: "The new movement regards the purpose of education as primarily social efficiency and social progress rather than individual development and personal success," followed by the inevitable reference to Plato and Aristotle, which with unconscious and monotonous irony reiterates the fatal retrospective habit of

mind. The future, if it learns from the past, will see to it that this type is put in charge of museums and cemeteries rather than of the growing child.

The main primary, as it was the original, purpose of the school is still to provide the child with a suitable intellectual equipment with which to face the world of the twentieth century. That is the weak spot, and it does not solve the problem to pretend that intellectual efficiency is Prussian and therefore to be shunned, or that preparation for the world of to-day is vocational and therefore no proper part of school work.

Principal Laurie contributes the most valuable and satisfying exposition of the position in his essay on "*Technical Education*." His statement—"To deal with the promotion of scientific research, I draw no distinction between pure and applied science, as no distinction can be drawn in practice. The first essential is the pursuit of science for its own sake as a pure branch of knowledge" (p. 249)—may be generalised. With regard to intellectual training, no distinction can be drawn between cultural and vocational training. The first essential is that the intellect must be trained for its own sake. The culture of a workman is the vocation of a scholar, and *vice versa*, though the scholar might not be sufficiently cultured to admit it. The educationist surely should use every means most calculated to develop the growing intelligence of a child and not scorn the new because they are, or may be, vocational.

Another remark from this essayist needs no comment:—"The love of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, which inspired the Greek civilisation, is not understood by the very men who have received a classical education. They do not see that the man of science is carrying on the tradition of Greek culture to-day."

As an example of how completely cut of touch a teacher may be with the psychology of modern youth, a passage from the essay on "*Moral and Religious Elements in the School*" may be quoted (p. 148):—"There seems to be no good reason why the narratives of the miracles in the Old Testament should be excluded. The wonderful and the miraculous are a source of great delight to young children and may be turned to good moral purpose. Provided that at some stage in the pupils' school career they are exhibited in their proper light, there is no reason to debar children from reading and enjoying these narratives." Possibly this may throw some light on the complaint (p. 110): "Little or no respect or consideration for older people is exacted from the young. It is not easy to detect in them the spirit of reverence either for institutions or individuals."

Classical education, according to Prof. Burnet, is about to achieve fresh laurels in the new era. "Humanity" its exponents call it—"that is to say, the literature, institutions, and thought of antiquity," thereby subtly suggesting that modern man is not humane, or humane by descent rather than by ascent, in conformity with the ancient, exploded Biblical myth, so harking ever backwards to the past rather than reaching out

towards and apprehending the more glorious future.

"Now the first thing," he says (pp. 183-85), "we have to realise is that we are witnessing the dawn of a renaissance of humanism in Europe comparable only to that of the fifteenth century or to the magnificent expansion of science in the nineteenth. . . . Excavation, especially in Crete, and the recovery of papyri from the sands of Egypt have not only transformed our outlook upon the Mediterranean civilisation, of which our own is the lineal descendant, but has given us the inspiring feeling that some new truth of first-rate importance may come to light any day. . . . It is becoming plain that what we call science may be best described as *thinking about the world in the Greek way*." (Dr. Laurie's way of putting this has already been quoted.) "But there is another, and perhaps a deeper, reason for believing that a humanist renaissance is at hand . . . In the hard times ahead of us the greater number will turn rather to the poets, historians, and philosophers for solace and edification than to the austerer discipline of the exact sciences. That is for the few; the mass of men can hardly penetrate beyond its outer courts."

So, the classics are still for the many and science for the few! Nothing is incredible, not even that this and much more like it should actually be written as a contribution to "Problems of National Education" at the close of the great war. If these are the people to whom their children's educational destinies are to be committed for four further years, the Labour Party will do well to expedite its attainment of a minimum State subsistence. For, be they turned out from school with their physique, morals, and manners, religious and æsthetic perceptions, civic ideals, and use of the subjunctive mood in subordinate clauses in the ancient languages never so perfect, it is difficult to see what else can save them from starvation in the hard times ahead. Until something more in keeping with the age is substituted for the intellectual training of the school, the words in the opening essay (p. 39) will continue to be true: "They begin their course with keen interest and lively curiosity. Then shades of the prison-house seem gradually to close upon the growing boy."

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BIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS.

Life and its Maintenance: A Symposium on Biological Problems of the Day. Pp. viii + 297. (London: Blackie and Son, Ltd., 1919.) Price 5s. net.

DESIRE, want, pain, disease, and death, the tools used by Nature for fashioning the race, are equally efficacious for awakening the mental and bodily faculties of the individual. Under their goad the soldier has not only shown himself gifted with an unsuspected degree of intelligence, but, what is more important, has discovered how to use the intelligence of others, so that at the close of the war our scientific arms, creations of the war itself, were more efficient than the corresponding formations in the Army of a nation which had long prided itself on its

thorough utilisation of all the means science placed at its disposal. Even among those compelled by age or infirmity to carry on their normal vocations at home, the trifling discomforts and privations to which they were subjected under war's constraints acted as hormones, as adequate stimuli for arousing their slumbering mental faculties, and disturbing for a while the hopeless incuria with which, to the detriment of the body politic, our upper and middle classes are afflicted. Any discomfort, whether it be the presence of a flea or the necessity of absorbing war bread, rouses an appropriate reaction and interest in its removal. Thus it came about that a sufficient number of persons, anxious to devote a certain time to learning about the world around them with special reference to the discomforts under which they were suffering, and willing to devote an hour in the week to this purpose, were found to justify the delivery at University College of a course of lectures which are reproduced in this volume under the general title of "Life and its Maintenance."

The first object of interest to every man is himself, and since at the time of the delivery of these lectures there was a certain amount of food shortage and a reasonable doubt as to the prospects of food supplies in the future, it is natural that most of these lectures are devoted to the subject of food, its effects on man, and the methods of increasing its production in this country.

Prof. Bayliss leads off with a clear, elementary account of the significance of food for the body. This is followed by a reassuring lecture on war bread by Prof. Hopkins. The third lecture, by Miss Hume, deals with accessory food factors, the importance of which was brought into unwelcome prominence by the outbreaks of beri-beri and scurvy among our forces abroad, and the consideration of which, in their relation to infant feeding, must always take an important place in our measures for ensuring the health of the community. Prof. Cushny contributes a judicious and well-balanced lecture on the subject of alcohol, and the various questions relating to the production of food by the improvements of farming methods are dealt with by Dr. Russell, Mr. Stapledon, Dr. Horne, and Profs. Hickson and Tansley.

The last five lectures are of a more miscellaneous import. The shortage of paper prompts Prof. Oliver, who was responsible for editing the whole series, to give a useful summary of the various materials used in the manufacture of paper and to describe certain new plants, notably a grass (*Spartina Townsendii*) growing on the mud flats of Southampton Water, which had been tried for this purpose. Dr. Vernon deals with the relations of industrial efficiency and fatigue. This subject is so closely connected with the question of hours of labour that no one possessed of a vote has a right to say that it does not concern him. This lecture, as indeed the whole collection, is an attempt to rouse the man in the street to take an interest and a part in the search for